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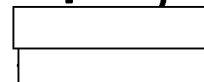
DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Report

The Soviet Defense Council and Military Policy Making

Volume I. Form and Functions

~~Top Secret~~



April 1972

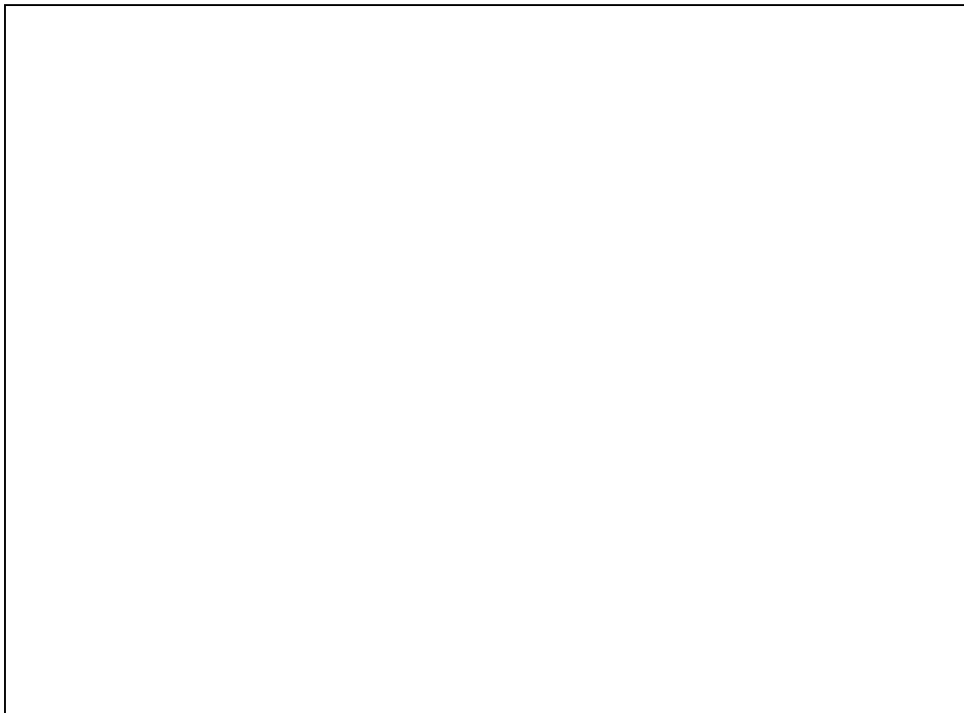
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
April 1972

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

The Soviet Defense Council and
Military Policy Making

Introduction

The ultimate decision-making authority in the USSR for defense issues, as for other issues of national policy, is the 15-man Politburo of the Communist Party's Central Committee. Major questions and often details relating to Soviet military programs are discussed, and final decisions arrived at, within this body. Occupied with a wide range of issues and interests, however, the Politburo delegates some of its authority to other bodies. The most important of these for military policy is a body known as the Defense Council.

Until recently the name and nature of the Defense Council, even its existence, have been uncertain, and the Soviets have treated such information as a state secret. Several []

[] have confirmed its existence, however, and together with a wide range of other evidence have yielded a composite picture of many of the Council's features and functions.

Certain aspects of the Defense Council's operation suggest that the Council could be characterized as the closest Soviet counterpart to the US National Security Council, but only in a very general and approximate sense, taking account of important differences in composition and usage. Each council is

Note: This report was prepared by the Office of Strategic Research and coordinated within CIA.

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more profitably understood in the context of its own national political system.

The Defense Council--whose permanent membership may be limited to the top three political leaders, the minister of defense, and possibly a defense industries overseer--appears to function in peacetime under party leader Brezhnev's chairmanship as a flexible defense advisory committee for the Politburo. In wartime the Defense Council may be transformed into the nucleus of a supreme agency for overall direction of the national war effort. Brezhnev, as party leader and Defense Council chairman, would almost certainly become the "Supreme Commander in Chief."

This report assembles and evaluates information available on the Defense Council from 1961 through 1971. The purpose of the study is to establish what is known and with what degree of certainty, and what is not known, about the Defense Council. Knowledge of the Council's nature and functions bears directly on the continuing effort to understand more fully how Soviet defense policies and programs are formulated and what the Soviet strategic command system would be during crises or in wartime. Knowledge of the Council's operation also provides a high-level institutional context within which to consider the question of the senior military leadership's influence on and participation in defense policy formulation.

Institutional relationships are far from the complete story, however. The human dimension is partly revealed by the Defense Council's procedures--in particular the central role of Brezhnev as chairman and the manner in which he imparts a flexibility and personal orientation to the Council's operation. Another dimension, largely implicit in this report, consists of the major developments in Soviet strategic weaponry and the introduction of new command and control procedures during the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime.

Evidence has been collected and examined on an all-source basis [redacted]
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intelligence has been incorporated into the study,
where appropriate.

The report is published in two parts. Volume I, "Form and Functions," presents a composite picture of the Council's features and functions as determined from the most reliable evidence. Volume II, "Evidence and Issues," lays out the evidential basis for judgments on the evolution, composition, hierarchical status, functions, and procedures of the Defense Council and identifies major issues which the operation of such a body presents for the Soviet leadership. For comparative purposes, the text of laws establishing the Romanian Defense Council and the Czechoslovak State Defense Council in 1969 are reproduced at Annex.

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Volume I. Form and Functions

Summary

The Defense Council is a civilian-military deliberative body situated between the Politburo and the Ministry of Defense and charged in peacetime with providing recommendations to the Politburo on major military policy issues. Its high-level membership, which includes at least the three top political leaders and the defense minister, suggests that a Council recommendation would exert strong influence within the Politburo. The Council is the most important single body in the USSR dealing primarily with military policy.

The size of the Defense Council is uncertain, but it is known to have a small core of at least four or five permanent members. These include party General Secretary Brezhnev as chairman, Premier Kosygin, President Podgornyy, Defense Minister Grechko, and possibly defense industries overseer Ustinov. Other top civilian and military officials--such as the KGB chairman, the Warsaw Pact commander in chief, and the Strategic Rocket Forces commander in chief--attend Defense Council sessions on invitation.

As a formal peacetime institution, the Defense Council is one of at least four (including the Politburo, the Military-Industrial Commission, and the General Staff) major leverage points at which varying high-level military views and pressures come together. The permanent memberships ensure that the major political, economic, and military interests are represented in the Council's policy discussions. As a consultative forum, the Defense Council provides the military and the defense industries with formal access to the political leadership and thus with an opportunity to exert pressure through argumentation.

The Defense Council's agenda apparently is concerned with virtually all major political-military questions. [REDACTED]

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A Defense Council meeting in May 1968 may have concerned the deteriorating state of Soviet-Czech relations and possibly the movement of Warsaw Pact forces to the Czech border. The agenda for another meeting, in July 1970, consisted of four major items, possibly including a contentious issue arising from the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, a review of Soviet relief flights to aid Peruvian earthquake victims, and the delivery and use of Soviet military equipment in the Middle East.

Other evidence on the nature of the Council's business is difficult to corroborate. Individual items variously reported to have been discussed by the Council or which would fall within the Council's purview include: ongoing strategic issues such as ABM development and deployment, revision of the military conscription law, national mobilization plans, military doctrine, military intelligence activities, world crisis situations, and the Soviet "war plan."

Brezhnev plays a central role in the Defense Council's operation. He is empowered to convene the Council and to determine the time, location, attendance, and agenda for a given meeting. Whether the Council meets on a regular basis is unknown. It has been reported as meeting "irregularly" and as meeting every four to six weeks. [redacted]

[redacted] The Council's membership suggests, however, that it could easily convene prior to Politburo meetings, particularly if the permanent members met in a limited attendance session.

The Minister of Defense, supported by elements of the General Staff, has important administrative responsibilities for Defense Council meetings. Whether these responsibilities are fulfilled on an ad hoc basis or as continuing functions is unclear. On one known occasion, Grechko evidently had the authority to schedule the order in which topics would be discussed, and possibly to limit attendance, but in these functions he probably was only implementing Brezhnev's instructions.

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The General Staff, through its Main Operations Directorate, supports the Minister of Defense in making arrangements for Council meetings. The support extends not only to procedural matters such as attendance lists but also to substantive support in the form of briefings and position papers, and ensuring the presence of specialists. These arrangements are evidently made with strong and detailed guidance from Grechko. The Main Operations Directorate probably serves as a secretariat for the Defense Council.

Evidence on the inner proceedings of the Council is sparse. There are indications that discussions can be conducted in the form of debates, that reports from various individuals and studies from various groups are considered, and that the chairman is a substantive contributor as well as moderator. Scheduling of at least one Council meeting prior to a Politburo meeting on the same day suggests that the first meeting was intended to be preparatory and advisory to the second; but it is unknown what forms the results of Council discussions may take, how differences are resolved, whether votes are taken, or whether the members formulate a Council position as such.

There are tenuous indications that the Council may have some decision-making powers, but further evidence is needed to confirm and clarify this possibility.

The Defense Council's status in wartime is unclear. Brezhnev, as both party leader and Defense Council chairman, would almost certainly become "Supreme Commander in Chief" of the armed forces. The Council's permanent members may form the nucleus of a supreme state agency, possibly similar in functions to the State Defense Committee of World War II, responsible for directing the Soviet war effort.

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Background

The Defense Council has had a shadowy existence at or near the highest level of the Soviet political system for at least the past decade (1961 through 1971). Informative and reliable evidence on the Defense Council became available only in 1968, however, []

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[] The veil of secrecy with which the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime has covered the Defense Council is believed to result from the politically sensitive issues raised by a high-level political-military body functioning under a collective leadership. Among such issues inherited by the post-Khrushchev leadership are the following:

- What shall the membership of the Council be? How shall the inclusion and exclusion of the various civilian and military leaders be justified?
- Who shall serve as chairman, and thus be in a special position to shape the Council's role, to court the military leadership's favor, and to enjoy the authority and prestige of the post?
- What shall the powers and procedures of the Council be in peacetime and wartime? And how shall the Council relate to other bodies, in particular the Politburo?

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Some of these issues arising from the operation of the Defense Council have evidently remained contentious, and modifications of the Council's role have been proposed and debated at the highest levels over the past several years.

Membership

The exact size of the Defense Council is uncertain, but it is believed to have a small core of four or five permanent members, with a variety of high-level civilian and military officials participating irregularly, on invitation.



Reliable information on the Defense Council became available only in 1968. Defense Council members Podgornyy, Grechko, Brezhnev, and Kosygin on Lenin's tomb during the 1968 May Day celebration.

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The permanent members include party leader L. I. Brezhnev, Premier A. N. Kosygin, President N. V. Podgornyy, Minister of Defense A. A. Grechko (see photograph), and possibly defense industries overseer D. F. Ustinov. The specific basis for permanent membership is unknown, but evidence on several counterpart bodies in East European countries suggests that the Defense Council was established formally, with membership designated by official function.

Brezhnev, for example, as General Secretary of the Central Committee, is the de facto chairman of

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the Politburo* as well as head of the party Secretariat, a body which supervises the implementation of Politburo policy decisions. As party leader, Brezhnev holds a post which traditionally entails leadership over defense affairs. His authority in the defense field is reflected in his personal supervision of the Central Committee's Administrative Organs Department (which oversees the military, security, and judicial establishments on behalf of the Central Committee) and the military's Chief Political Directorate (which functions as a Central Committee department responsible for ensuring the political reliability of the armed forces).

Kosygin, as chairman of the Council of Ministers, has constitutional authority over the Ministry of Defense and the eight defense industries. In addition, the Military-Industrial Commission, which oversees the various ministries and agencies involved in defense production, is attached to the Council of Ministers.

Chief of state Podgornyy has not been as clearly or closely identified with defense affairs as the other suspected permanent Defense Council members, but as President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (the USSR's legislature) he has nominal constitutional authority under Article 49 to appoint and remove the high command of the USSR's armed forces and to order general or partial mobilization.

Ustinov, a candidate member of the Politburo and a party secretary, is the party's overseer for military-industrial affairs. He apparently has

* *There is no known de jure basis for describing Brezhnev's position as head of the Politburo. Information on how the Politburo operates makes it clear, however, that Brezhnev has in fact functioned as Politburo chairman since replacing Khrushchev as party leader, and as General Secretary is recognized as head of the Politburo in practice. Brezhnev has responsibility for convening Politburo sessions, determining who should participate, and presiding at the sessions, during which he has summarized discussions and made rulings on policy issues.*

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direct supervisory authority over the Military-Industrial Commission and generally over the production of advanced weapons. The commission's chairman, L. V. Smirnov, has been shown [] to be subordinate to Ustinov, who serves as a personal link from the commission to the Politburo and the Defense Council, and through whom the Politburo monitors defense production.* In addition, [] Ustinov has contacts with at least two defense-related departments of the Central Committee--the Administrative Organs Department and the Defense Industry Department.

Grechko, as Minister of Defense, would represent the interests of the professional military, presenting its recommendations and requests to party and government leaders.

Some Defense Council meetings are limited-attendance sessions, restricted to the permanent members. The additional participation of invited officials in an "enlarged session" is determined according to the agenda, and their attendance can be restricted either to a given session or to the discussion of a single item on the agenda. Ultimately, however, invitations appear to be issued according to Brezhnev's (or possibly at times Grechko's) personal judgment on the appropriateness of having a given official attend. KGB chairman Andropov, for example, was pointedly excluded by Grechko from a Council meeting [], although the General Staff officer who was to issue the invitations had assumed that Andropov would be invited. Whether this episode reflected personal animosity, rivalry between the KGB and military intelligence services,

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or just the agenda is unknown, and whether Grechko was acting on his own or implementing prior instructions from Brezhnev is uncertain. The distinction between Defense Council members and other participants has been further highlighted through Grechko's use of the term "outsiders" to characterize invited civilian and military officials.

Some officials who have attended known Defense Council meetings but who are not believed to be permanent members include Warsaw Pact Commander in Chief I. I. Yakubovskiy, KGB Chairman Yu. V. Andropov, and the late Strategic Rocket Forces Commander in Chief N. I. Krylov. The following officials reportedly also participate in Defense Council meetings on occasion:

- the chairman of the Military-Industrial Commission, L. V. Smirnov
- the chairman of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan), N. K. Baybakov
- the head of the Chief Political Directorate of the armed forces, A. A. Yepishev
- the chief of the General Staff, V. G. Kulikov
- the chiefs of the General Staff's Main Operations Directorate, M. M. Kozlov, and Main Intelligence Directorate, P. I. Ivashutin
- the Warsaw Pact chief of staff, S. M. Shtemenko.

Presumably, other high-level officials are also invited to attend some Defense Council meetings as ad hoc participants.

Whether considered as a small nucleus of permanent members or as an expandable forum for a variety of officials, the Defense Council is a joint civilian-military body. Its permanent membership appears designed to ensure that Council meetings are attended by at least one representative from the party,

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governmental, defense industries, and military sectors. And despite some uncertainties and inconsistencies in reports on the Council's membership, it is clearly civilian dominated.

The composition of the Defense Council suggests, further, that within the Soviet institutional hierarchy the Council is situated between the Politburo and the Ministry of Defense. It is uncertain, however, whether the Soviets consider it a party body attached to the Politburo, or a government body attached to the Council of Ministers.

Chairmanship

The chairman of the Defense Council is almost certainly Brezhnev. He [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] has himself stated on two known semipublic occasions that he is the chairman. [redacted]

[redacted]

There is a conflicting suggestion, provided in July 1970 in remarks by [redacted] that Kosygin [redacted] comment on the Council chairmanship may only reflect his ignorance of the Council's operation or his intention to deceive his listeners. A third possible explanation for the comment would be a rotating chairmanship, alternating between the two party and government leaders. This would be a highly unusual procedure for the Soviets, however, and consideration of

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Brezhnev Reviews Troops in Exercise Dvina in 1970



After reviewing the parade in Minsk following Exercise Dvina, the large-scale Soviet maneuvers held in Belorussia in March 1970, Brezhnev was [REDACTED] to have identified himself as chairman of the "Committee for the Defense of the Country," adding that he keeps his military uniform in a prominent place in his apartment, ready for donning should the occasion arise.



Prior to the ceremonial troop review, Brezhnev (second from right) listens to Defense Minister Grechko (third from left).

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Shown here amid an array of top Soviet military officers reviewing troops which participated in the maneuvers, Brezhnev was the only civilian Defense Council member to attend Exercise Dvina. The other civilian, fifth from left, is P. M. Masharov, first secretary of the Belorussian central committee and a Politburo candidate member.

(Red Star photograph, 17 March 1970)

In the first half of March 1970, the massive Dvina combined-arms maneuvers were conducted on the territory of Belorussia under the leadership of the Minister of Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union A. A. Grechko. Their purpose was to test and further perfect the level of combat training of troops and the operational training of staffs.

The armed forces of the USSR are growing and becoming stronger along with the entire country. From year to year the economic and defensive might of our motherland is increasing. The Communist Party, the Soviet government, and the Soviet people are devoting the most intense attention to the guardians of the motherland and are daily concerned about them.

A new and striking manifestation of this was the presence in Minsk of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Comrade L. I. Brezhnev. Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev showed exceptionally great interest in the maneuvers. He delivered a speech before its participants...and attended a review of troops.

From the Soviet book
The Dvina Maneuvers

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Brezhnev's political style renders the possibility remote.*

Two of Brezhnev's major objectives have been to achieve preeminence within the collective leadership and to win support from the military leadership. The authority and influence inherent in the chairmanship of a body such as the Defense Council bear directly on both objectives. Brezhnev would recognize the Defense Council's potential as a formal but flexible instrument for exercising control over the senior military leadership's participation in defense policy deliberations. He would also see in the Council's chairmanship a means to ensure himself a prominent role in those deliberations. Although there is no available evidence on the Defense Council as an arena of political competition, the chairmanship of the Council can reasonably be presumed to be a matter of contention within the Soviet leadership and to be a political prize. Brezhnev has been successful in gaining the preeminent position in the Politburo, and he probably would not be content to share the chairmanship of the Defense Council. Although the dominant figure in the Soviet leadership, Brezhnev is nevertheless not omnipotent. Furthermore, evidence bearing on the Defense Council chairmanship has been received at wide intervals.**

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Agenda

The Defense Council involves itself in a wide range of policy matters related to the military aspects of national security. If the laws and statutes formally establishing similar bodies in Eastern Europe provide a reliable indication, the Council probably has broad statutory sanctions for its scope of activities.*

Evidence on the Council's exact agenda is difficult to corroborate. Subjects variously reported over the past several years to have been discussed at Council meetings include strategic issues related to the development and deployment of antiballistic missiles, revisions in the military conscription law, military doctrine, weapons development and production, national mobilization plans and problems of industrial readiness for mobilization, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, military intelligence activities, world crisis situations, and the "war plan." More broadly, the Council has been reported as having a deliberative role in virtually all major military-political questions.

* See Volume II of this report, pages 63-70, for a discussion of these East European bodies, and page 70, for a summary comparison of their similarities.

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Peacetime Functions

Deliberation and Recommendations. The membership and agenda of the Defense Council indicate that it is the highest-level Soviet body concerned primarily with defense policies. As a peacetime deliberative forum, the Defense Council ensures that major party, government, military, and defense industries interests are considered and coordinated in the formulation of those policies.

Most reports characterize the Defense Council as a deliberative and not a decision-making body, charged in peacetime with providing recommendations to the Politburo. Some indirect evidence from the

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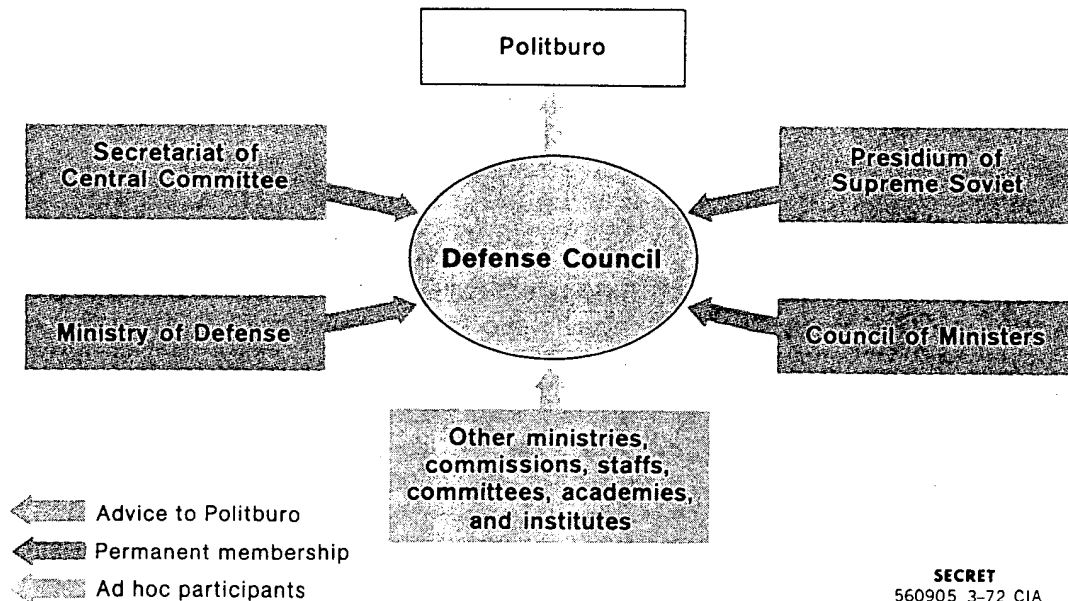
[redacted] Further, the nature of the topics discussed by the Defense Council suggests that the results of the deliberations would be reviewed by the Politburo as a whole.

The description of the Defense Council as an advisory or deliberative body may nevertheless be

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The Soviet Defense Council



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incomplete. The Council's three top civilians are also senior members of the Politburo, suggesting that a distinction between the Defense Council as an advisory body and the Politburo as the ultimate decision-making authority may not be easily maintained in practice. Many of the recommendations advanced by the Council to the Politburo for final consideration probably encounter little, if any, opposition. The influence exerted by a policy recommendation endorsed by Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgornyy, Grechko, Ustinov, and possibly other officials, would seem sufficient--on many matters--to constitute a foregone decision.

The Politburo is by no means, however, a rubber stamp for the Defense Council or any other group. It is believed to arrive at many decisions by majority vote among the 15 full members, and some clandestine reports strongly suggest that on occasion a majority of the members have disagreed with and voted against measures backed by one or more of the top three leaders.

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There is some slight evidence [] that Defense Council meetings do not always result in recommendations or in a Council position, as such, and that some meetings may be solely deliberative. The determining factor may be the amount of disagreement evident. In such instances, and possibly at other times also, the Council may restrict itself to preparing options on a given issue. Contentious issues would then presumably be resolved within the Politburo.

Decision-Making Authority? There are some tenuous indications that with regard to certain issues the Defense Council may have some decision-making power explicitly delegated to it. One Soviet official, [] claimed in July 1970 that the Council's decisions on "military doctrine" are final and binding on all organs affected. The same official stated that the Council makes decisions on recommendations received from the Ministry of Defense for the development and all production of military equipment. Other possible indications of some kind of decision-making authority for the Defense Council have been detected [] The existence of such authority is also suggested by the example of Khrushchev's Main Military Council, which evidently had the authority to issue certain "requirements" which were to be "strictly fulfilled" by commanders and party organizations in the armed forces, and by the responsibilities of certain high-level political-military bodies in East European countries.**

Political-Military Consultation. As a peacetime consultative forum, the Defense Council allows the

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** Information on Khrushchev's council and on the East European defense councils and committees is only analogical evidence, at best, and does not necessarily indicate anything about the Defense Council in the Soviet Union today. There are several identifiable similarities in all these councils, however, suggesting that fuller evidence might reveal a closer correspondence of functions and features than is now evident.

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defense minister and, upon invitation, other military leaders formal access to at least the top three political leaders. For the senior military leaders--unrepresented on the Politburo since 1957, but allowed irregularly to present their views to that body--the Defense Council may be the most important formal channel through which they can advocate positions. As a permanent member of the Council, Grechko is presumably able to present and argue views of the military. In preparation for the Defense Council meeting [] Grechko is known to have requested a brief to be written by a group of weapons specialists and slanted toward a particular line of reasoning. Other preparations made by Grechko for the meeting on 21 July--including special arrangements to fly a key official involved in strategic missile production back to Moscow from Czechoslovakia--also suggest that the military takes advantage of the opportunity for special pleading within the Council.

An opportunity to exert pressure through argumentation does not, however, necessarily translate into genuine influence on the decisions eventually arrived at. Formal access is only one of a complex of factors bearing on the matter of "influence." Analysis of possible influence exercised--assuming that difficulties of definition, measurement, and evidence can be surmounted--is probably best made by considering specific instances than by focusing on a given institutional outlet.*

Relationship With Other Bodies. The Defense Council may also serve as a formal channel through which views and recommendations of the defense industries, perhaps as formulated in the Military-Industrial Commission, are forwarded to the political leadership. D. F. Ustinov would seem the logical

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person to sum up and present commission views at Defense Council meetings, although there is no direct evidence he has done so.



Defense industries overseer D. F. Ustinov (at left) and party leader L. I. Brezhnev (second from left) examine wharfs in Leningrad during a visit to the Leningrad naval base in 1965, a period of reorganization for the defense industries. To Brezhnev's left are the first secretary of the Leningrad oblast, V. Tolstikov, the commander of the Leningrad Naval Base, Admiral I. Baykov, and then Minister of Defense R. Malinovskiy.

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On one occasion, Grechko arranged for a group of weapons specialists from the defense industries and the defense ministry to meet privately with him and to prepare a substantive brief for him prior to a Defense Council meeting []. Although Grechko would clearly have authority to draw upon the resources of his own ministry, the basis for his evident authority to request services and studies from the defense industries is less clear.

A possible explanation for this type of consultation and cooperation may be the formal attachment of specialized components to the Defense Council. The existence of at least an economic defense component of the Council is suggested [].

[] the Council's economic component consists of the ministers of the defense industries and representatives of Gosplan--the chairman and his deputies. The functions of the component were not discussed, but the similarity of the component's reported membership with that of the Military Industrial Commission is striking. More reliable evidence will be needed, however, to clarify

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[] implication that the commission may function at times as a component of the Defense Council. The exact relationship between these two bodies on a continuing basis remains uncertain. []

If [] is true, Grechko may have been drawing upon the services of part of the Defense Council itself when he was preparing for the Council meeting []

The relationship between the Defense Council and several other bodies--such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the civilian and military intelligence services (KGB and GRU), various Soviet research institutes, and some of the Central Committee departments--is uncertain. Defense-related documents, analytical studies, and personal testimony from these groups are presumably requested by the Defense Council and considered at its meetings. Evidence on the Council as a recipient of such studies and reports, however, is largely inferential. []

[] Grechko on one occasion had (unspecified) documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivered to him []

[] The documents were possibly intended for and considered by the Council.

According to [] relevant studies from research institutes of the Academy of Sciences (such as the USA Institute and the Institute of World Economics and International Relations) are written for the Council, sometimes reaching it directly but sometimes being integrated with General Staff studies. Presumably the Council would also receive defense-related analytical and estimative intelligence memoranda from the International Department and the Bloc Department of the Central Committee, as well as factual or even field reports of particular importance.*

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There is little direct and reliable evidence, however, from which to trace the possible flow of intelligence and defense policy-related papers to the Defense Council.

Wartime Functions

Evidence on the Defense Council's status and functions during a crisis is sparse. The small permanent membership and certain aspects of the Council's operation show that it can be convened on short order, and it may function in times of crisis as an abbreviated Politburo with military representation. One known meeting, [] did occur at a time of heightened tension between the USSR and Czechoslovakia and during a week when several combat divisions of Warsaw Pact forces were being sent to the Czech border. The meeting was called on one day's notice and concerned, in Podgornyy's words, "very serious questions." This meeting was followed by a full Politburo meeting, however, suggesting that the Defense Council may function as an advisory body even in times of crisis.*

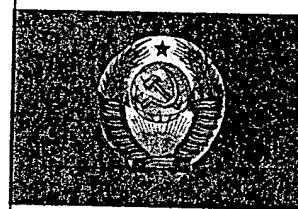
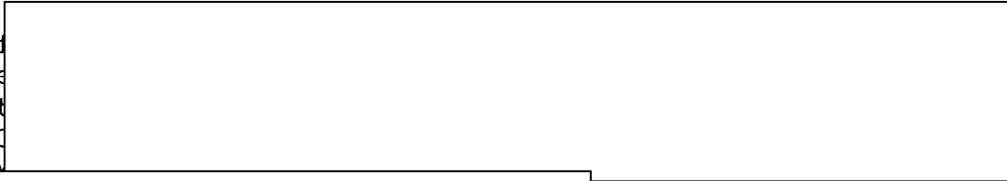
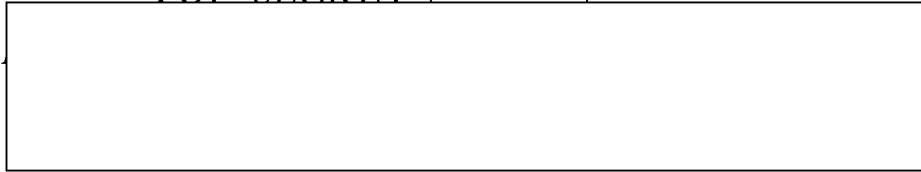
In a national emergency calling for decisions within minutes rather than hours, party leader Brezhnev may be empowered to act on his own or, with more time (hours or days), would convene the Defense Council and the Politburo. The type of evidence needed to confirm this possibility, []

[] is not available. []

* Whether the Defense Council met in the succeeding months prior to the Soviet intervention on 20 August 1968 is not known. On the other hand, there is reliable evidence that the entire Politburo met often. Presumably, scheduling of Council meetings prior to Politburo sessions could be easily arranged, particularly if the Council met in restricted attendance session.

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Флаг Верховного Главно-
командующего Вооружен-
ными Силами СССР

Flag of the Supreme
Commander in Chief.
From the current (1968)
*Soviet Watch Officer's
Handbook.*

In wartime, party leader
Brezhnev, possibly by virtue
of being the peacetime De-
fense Council chairman, will
almost certainly become the
Supreme Commander in Chief.
And the permanent members
of the Defense Council (or
perhaps only the civilian
members) may form the nucleus
of a supreme state agency,

similar in functions to
the State Defense Com-
mittee of World War II,
responsible for direct-
ing the Soviet war effort.



Флаг Министра обороны
СССР

Flag of the Minister of
Defense. From the *Watch
Officer's Handbook.*

The evidence is in-
conclusive on these
points, however, and con-
sists principally of
Soviet military writings.
The post of Supreme Com-
mander in Chief itself
will, at any rate, exist
in wartime, and some
kind of strategic com-
mand system, short of

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[]
convocation of the entire Politburo, is believed to have been instituted around 1967.*

Procedures

[]
[] Brezhnev's central role in the peacetime operation of the Defense Council. He evidently has the authority, for example, to initiate and schedule Council meetings at his own discretion. []
[]

[] This suggests that Brezhnev may call the Defense Council into session frequently or seldom, as he judges necessary. He also evidently has the authority to restrict or enlarge attendance at a meeting. Some inconclusive evidence suggests that Grechko may, to an unknown extent, share in this authority, but it is more likely that he simply implements Brezhnev's instructions. Finally, Brezhnev evidently has the authority to determine the agenda for a meeting and possibly to set the order in which individual items will be considered.

The Defense Council may also meet at regularly scheduled times, but there is no reliable evidence available to confirm or refute this possibility.

[]
[] The basis for holding more formal sessions is uncertain, but the available details on the known meetings indicate that on both occasions the decision was Brezhnev's and that the meetings were not regularly scheduled ones.

Known details of preparations for the Defense Council meeting on 21 July 1970 indicate that Brezhnev

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relied heavily on the Minister of Defense to make arrangements such as issuing invitations, setting the order in which agenda items would be considered, and restricting attendance within a Council session on an item-by-item, "need to know" basis. Grechko in turn relied upon, and provided detailed guidance to, the chief of the General Staff's Main Operations Directorate, M. M. Kozlov, for implementing these arrangements.

On what basis and to what extent Grechko and the General Staff are normally involved in preparations for Defense Council meetings is uncertain. Consideration of East European counterpart councils and reported remarks by [REDACTED] suggest, however, that the Council has a secretariat and that the Ministry of Defense provides the staff. Some evidence suggests that Kozlov, or even Grechko himself, may be the Council's general secretary; other evidence suggests that the chief of the General Staff would normally serve as Council secretary. The General Staff's Main Operations Directorate probably functions as the Council's secretariat.

On occasion the General Department of the Central Committee may also perform certain administrative services for the Defense Council. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The General Department is responsible for notifying Politburo members of scheduled and unscheduled Politburo meetings, and Brezhnev may have elected to use this means of communication as an expedient [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Evidence on the inner proceedings of the Defense Council is sparse. Brezhnev could reasonably be expected, however, to guide the Council's operation at least as fully as he does the activities of the Politburo and its executive arm, the Secretariat.*

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He probably has considerable influence on the course of Council discussions, on any decisions or positions arrived at, and hence on the Council's actual role within the Soviet system.

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~~Top Secret~~



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